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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes discussions at an invitational workshop on labor development in Nigeria. The discussion centered on the need to promote an individual work ethic and to improve the quality of life of the average worker. The following broad topics were discussed: (1) the negative effect of colonialism on individual productivity and the lack of effective labor leadership since independence; (2) the cultural and technological barriers to improving productivity; (3) the need to establish a national minimum wage that would permit workers to live above the poverty line; (4) employer-employee relations; (5) the role of government as both an employer and a labor developer; (6) the need to improve the safety and health conditions and to promote an individual work ethic by developing full employment; (7) the inclusion in planning of the handicapped, unpaid workers, nonunionized workers, children, women, workers in small businesses, and the unemployed; (8) the role of the Nigrian Labor Congress in national politics; and (9) the need to promote certain traditional values, such as respect for learning, that encourage productivity and to discourage other traditions, such as inattention to punctuality and time management, that are incompatible with an industrial society. A list of participants, the text of the introductory address, and a description of the Africa Leadership Forum are appended. (FMW)

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-FRICA LEADERSHIP FORUM

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FARM HOUSE DIALOGUE

LABOUR AND DEVELOPMENT

Dialogue 5

7 - 9 July, 1989

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FARM HOUSE DIALOGUE -

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

The Dialogue is neither a political gathering nor is it a gathering to chastise and condemn. It is basically a brainstorming event. Everyone is at liberty to freely express his or her opinions.

It is a concerned attempt to search for solutions to national problems through discussion. It does not seek to delve into who brought about particular predicament of the nation. Although a knowledge of how the nation got to a specific impasse or difficult situation might provide useful lessons for the future.

It, instead, is an attempt to engage in a proper analysis of national problems and arrive through discussions and dialogue at practical suggestions and recommendations which may help in resolving all or part of these problems.

In consequence, the Dialogue places great emphasis on the selection of individuals to participate in the discussions, noting the importance of inviting always personalities who have knowledge and insights into the particular national issues being discussed and who can make substantial contributions.

It is aimed not always to reach consensus but to provide opportunity for recording honest disagreements on vital national issues.

Each Dialogue will result in a publication that will capture the essence of the discussion and the main conclusions reached.

FARM HOUSE DIALOGUE

Dialogue 5

LABOUR AND DEVELOPMENT

Chairman: General H. Adefope (Rtd)
Rapporteur: Dr (Mrs) F. A. Durojaiye Oyekanmi
Editor: Professor Akin. L. Mabogunje

Introduction

The fifth Farm House Dialogue took place at Obasanjo farms in Ota on July 7 to 9 1989. General Obasanjo as Chief host delivered an opening address. In it he stressed that it is not labour per se that is important but the productivity of labour. It is the increased productivity of labour that serves as catalyst in the process of development. For this to happen, labour must become more efficient and effective through acquiring more and more skill. Furthermore the rigid distinction between workers and management must be blurred if labour is to contribute its optimum to development. One has to look at social stratification as a reality of life and recognise that wage earners cannot be helped by pulling down the wage payers. Industrial conflicts need to be minimized by the routinization of good labour relations and the identification and greater use of those factors in our culture which make for better productivity of labour (see Appendix II for full text).

Major General H. Adefope as Chairman of the Dialogue delivered an oral address. He started by calling attention to the need to define clearly what is meant by labour in the context of this Dialogue. There has been a tendency in the past to put an erroneous and rigid line of division between labour and management. He believes there is real advantage in considering the definition adopted by the Ministry of Labour, Trade and Productivity that labour is bodily and mental work engaged in by human beings. He observed that Nigeria cannot afford to accept solely the definition of labour as obtained in socialist or capitalist countries. Although one cannot lose sight of the historical evolution of the opposition between labour and capital, it was noted that there had been a movement towards greater democratization of both.

Given the development orientation of this Dialogue, it was agreed that labour be defined as any human effort that improves, creates or adds value to other factors. In other words, labour consists of everyone that do bodily and mental work. In the development context, the word can be used interchangeably with human resources. While the social distinction between employer/entrepreneur and employee, or between management and worker cannot be overlooked, the main thing is that people are contributing towards production and therefore adding value to certain things and thereby ultimately aiding development.

There is an erroneous assumption that productivity applies only to workers and not to those designated as managers. This notion is highly mistaken and should be discarded because the creation and improvement of value are intrinsic in labour productivity in all human activities whether involving bodily or mental effort. From this perspective, the distinction between labour and management should be seen more as roles individuals have to play in the production process. How well both groups act their parts is also a function of the social environment of work. The example of Japan was cited where job is seen as a life long situation and both the workers and the management contribute their best to production.

As regards development, participants agreed to accept the definition arrived at during the First Farm House Dialogue on 'Leadership and Development' as "a process concerned with people's capacity in a defined area, over a defined period to manage and induce change; that is to predict, plan, understand and monitor change". Whilst also recognising that the most commonly used indicator of development is the economic measure in terms of increment in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or per capita income, the Dialogue insists that social, political, psychological dimensions of development must also be kept in view as mentioned in the Fourth Farm House Dialogue. In this regard, great importance attaches to issues of equity and social justice which affect the individual's sense of belonging and of identification with the goals of the nation-state and which consequently affect his performance in the development process.

With this agreement on definitions, it was decided to structure the rest of the discussion under the following heads:

1. The Nigerian Past and Labour Process.
2. Labour and Productivity.
3. Remuneration of Labour.
4. Employers and Labour.

5. State and Labour.
6. The Work Environment and Work Ethics.
7. What is Labour.
   (a) handicapped labour.
   (b) unpaid labour.
   (c) unorganized labour.
   (d) child labour.
   (e) women and labour.
   (f) informal sector labour.
   (g) unemployed labour.
8. Labour and Politics.
9. Nigerian Culture, Labour Relations and Development.

THE NIGERIAN PAST AND THE LABOUR PROCESS

In traditional Nigerian society, it was observed that work can be individual or community. While a person may be indolent in the performance of individual work, he dared not be lazy in community work because he would be ostracised. There are proverbs in various Nigerian languages which stress that he who is lazy shall not eat. Nigerian traditional cultures consequently extolled among their members the virtues of hard work, honesty, truthfulness, community feeling of responsibility and accountability and high moral standards. These cultures stress that an honest day's work demands an honest day's pay. There were sanctions to ensure honesty and the community sought to know the source of suspected wealth. Individuals were encouraged to regard themselves as their brother's keeper. Lazy people were ridiculed and even ostracised. The exception perhaps were Priests and Priestesses who were allowed to live at reasonable level of comfort without much physical labour because they communicated with the ancestral spirits and with the gods/goddesses to ensure the safety and prosperity of the workers.

Before the colonial era most people were self-employed and therefore saw the fruits of their labour as important. With colonialism came the system of wage labour. People no longer felt there was dignity in being a wage labourer or in paid employment with all the submission to the employers that it entailed.

The context of work and social justice at each period must thus be examined closely. The sense of justice which gingered people to work hard at the community level broke down with the advent of colonialism and wage employment. Working for

the colonialist became "Oyibo" or "European" work. A mentality developed that you did not exert yourself too strenuously at such labour if it was to last and it was important that it lasted for a long time. Indolence gradually became a part of the culture of 'labour" in colonial times. This mentality extended from government work to even private sector employment. It was further compounded by a weakened attitude of honesty which was expressed in the belief that the good fortune of any individual can only come through extractions from some other individual. Hence there arose a practice where workers pilfered things from their workplaces without much compunction because they felt that the employers (the colonialists) were imposed on them and carried away overseas the gains from the fruits of their labour.

By independence, labour was part of the politically conscious group in the country. It had come to see government as being on the other side of their welfare and to be confronted spiritedly for any improvement in the same. Today, a major problem of the Nigerian society is how to change this negative attitude of labor to government and to raise the low productivity which it engenders. In this regard, a participant pointed out that:

> "Productivity is (largely) an attitude of the mind. It is a mentality of progress of the constant improvement of that which exists. It is the certainty of being able to do better today than yesterday and continuously. It is the continual effort (by human beings - managers and workers) to apply new techniques and new methods, it is the faith of human progress .."

When put this way, it is possible to appreciate the enormity of the factors militating against the achievement of the highest level of productivity from Nigerian labour. What is involved in brief is how to restore to Nigerian labour the self-esteem which was eroded away during the colonial era.

The Dialogue consequently tried to explore the psychological and philosophical dimensions of the problem to see how the present situation can begin to be changed. It noted, for instance, that in spite of modernization, the Japanese society has manage to preserve its ingrained cultural practice of respect for elders. By contrast, western education has induced Nigerian youths no longer to respect their elders. The acquisition of literacy skills during the colonial period encouraged an inversion of values such that young literate felt superior to the older illiterate person with experience; even when such persons were their parents. There is need to re-examine the values being inculcated in children in our educational system. Parents also need to pay more atten-

tion to the proper socialisation of their children and to imbue them with a correct appreciation of the values and practices of our traditional culture.

Another factor which had affected the Nigerian attitude to work is the easy access to wealth that became the vogue with the approach to independence. First, there were the politicians who in the First and Second Republic showed that all that was needed to become rich and comfortable was to win an election. There were series of military coups and the civil war during which many of those who enlisted in the army turned out being inexplicably and comparatively wealthier than those they left behind. Then followed the oil boom years when with the Udoji awards most urban Nigerians developed an illusion of wealth. With the present collapse of the economy, this propensity for easy wealth has spawned the cocaine pushers, the drug barons, the ten-percenters and other economic parasites. All this development seriously undermined the culture of hard work and honest living.

Another negative factor in the Nigerian past has been the way the constitutional principle of federal character was implemented. Instead of being used to engender a broad sense of participation among all Nigerian ethnic groups, it became a vehicle for ethnic chauvinism and discrimination. Its role today has been to aggravate the sense of social injustice and discourage hard work and diligence especially in the public sector. The principle of federal character has today come to be seen as antithetical to merit which it need not be. Nonetheless, it was also observed that most Nigerians tended to confuse merit with paper qualification which it is not. Clearly, this is an area where the country needs to make some deliberate and overt effort to reconcile merit or track record of performance and federal character as basis for enhancing national unity and socio-economic development.

Moreovcer, there has to be greater equity in the creation of national wealth as well as in its distribution. The overdependence of our economy on petroleum since the mid 1970's, and the consequent marginalisation of farmers and other primary sector producers have to be rectified if labour is to once again assume a place of importance in the development of this nation.

The Dialogue noted that one of the most important factors militating against the development of this nation is the lack of effective leadership at all levels, even among organised labour. This lack of effective leadership to mobilise the norms and values positive to societal growth and development constitutes a major failing in our national life. It is further aggravated by the frequent changes of government and the practice of each new one to change our constitution. None of these changes, however, can be said to address seriously the fundamental problems of our underdevelopment. In

most cases the style of life of each generation of leadership, whether military or civilian, ends up alienating the workers and discouraging diligence and trustworthiness. Wrong people are placed in important positions and no sanctions are exacted for their failures or malfeasance.

One has seen, for instance, the repeated failures of such government parastatals like the Nigeria Airways, the Nigerian Railways, NITEL and NEPA. Yet private sector organisations both national and multinational are performing well. Why do public sector agencies fail while the private sector concerns manage to keep afloat? The infrastructural facilities for Nigeria's progress are certainly already in place, but somehow the country

has been unable to make these work effectively. It must be admitted that leadership in the country has failed if twenty-nine years after independence, the nation cannot alter or change or amend any wrongs that were wrecked on its cultures in the colonial era.

The Dialogue also noted that apart from occasional clamours for improvement in workers' pay and conditions of service, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has also been unable to take overt actions to discipline its member who run down the establishments where they work. It was observed that the NLC hardly openly condemns sabotage by its members e.g. damage of NEPA cables or to machinery, in the process of industrial disputes even though this entails a loss of working assets and productivity. Most Nigerian cultures set a premium on hearing both sides in a dispute and resolving conflicts through dialogue. Hence, there is need to strengthen in Nigeria an industrial labour relation culture which sets great store on a free flow of communication between management and workers to enhance the productivity of enterprises and the development of the country. It is essential that union leaders ensure that their members come to better appreciate how to use the mechanism of dialogue and communication for resolving industrial problems and enhancing productivity. They must also work closely with management to find ways of channeling our traditional values of honesty, hard work and community spirit to uplift the dignity and productivity of labour.

LABOUR AND PRODUCTIVITY

This section in the discussion concentrated on what needs to be done to improve labour productivity in the country beyond the attitudinal changes. These include changes in the human, technological, environmental, managerial and other factors which also determine labour productivity. The human factors include health-care, nutrition, housing, transport and educational (formal and informal), in other words,

those factors dealing with welfare as well as skill acquisition and improvement, otherwise classified as human resources development. The technological factors encompass the whole work situation including machinery available for work, and avenues for training, improvement, and retraining on the job. There must be proper articulation of set goals and targets to be attained with the use of machines within a given time frame. Generally there has been an absence of a yardstick for productivity measurement in Nigeria. Time and time-keeping which are crucial to an industrialised society have not been so important in the traditional Nigerian culture because of its background of essentially peasant production.

The environment of productive activities in Nigeria is determined both by society and government. The extended family system and societal demands exact their own toll on the productivity of labour. The fact that each worker on the average has to bear responsibility for a number of unemployed and unemployable relations puts some stress and strain on him which are not conducive for high productivity. Government's policies and legislations can be equally discouraging to both management and labour. When directors of parastatals are appointed for political, ethnic and other reasons which have no direct bearing on the experience and ability necessary for managing such establishments or when promotions are based on other considerations than efficiency at work, productivity of labour is adversely affected. These practices generally demoralise the worker and impede progress. In the same manner, legislative measures or lack of such measures do affect productivity. The absence of a strong progrmme on family planning until the recent national population policy, for example, has affected not only the supply of labour but also the effective performance of a segment of labour particularly women.

Finally, the Dialogue noted that in order to increase the productivity of labour attention should be paid to the proper induction of newly employed workers and the constant consultation of the total body of employees on matters of meeting production targets and output. Management should not wait until a crisis situation has arisen before engaging in fruitful dialogue and consultation with the workers' union. The training, improvement and retraining of workers should also be taken seriously in both the public and private sectors of the economy. Research into better ways of motivating workers to achieve stated objectives must be carried out on a continuing basis. Replacement of old and obsolete equipments must be done as soon as economically feasible. Enterprises should subscribe to relevant local and international journals and encourage management and labour to read these as one important method of continuously upgrading their knowledge. For the much needed technolgical transfer to take place there is need for both management and workers to continuously exchange ideas as to how to improve on current knowledge and skills. The technologists who repair

machinery and equipment should be encouraged to think of designing and fabricating spare parts and consider other ways of using the machinery and equipment for greater efficiency. Only in this way can Nigerian enterprises foster and nurture indigenous technology.

REMUNERATION OF LABOUR

The Dialogue observed that with the current high cost of living, it is a mystery how workers earning less than six hundred naira manage to exist. At present, the lowest paid worker earns N150 per month; the majority of workers do not earn enough to keep pace with the constant inflation in the cost of living.

The remuneration of labour, of course, includes, apart from the wage, fringe benefits and allowances such as those for transportation, housing and health care. At the plant level, some packaged incentives are also used as part of productivity schemes. Nonetheless, it was the considered view of the Dialogue that basic wages should be negotiated and should be flexible enough so that it can be adjusted easily with the rising cost of living. It was felt that government should desist from sporadically reviewing wages without adequate consultation with the private sector. Even where such consultations took place in the past, the problem of implementation was always overwhelming and, as was evident with the Udoji award, ended by worsening the situation.

It was felt that social security legislations and schemes to minimize workers expenditure on such items as health-care and retrenchment could take some heat off the wage issue. This means that the State should live up to its responsibility both as an employer and as guardian of national interest. Such bodies as the PPIB have been ineffective. It was recommended that this agency should be made to determine what can be defined in the Nigerian context as a living wage - that remuneration which would put the worker above the poverty line. Moreover, in order to relieve women workers, the provision of day care centres or child minding arrangements should be encouraged in most industrial establishments. The practice of stopping worker's pay for no justifiable reason should be condemned as contrary to the basic rights of workers and socially unjust. A worker should be able to depend on the principle of an honest day's pay for an honest day's job. Government should consider more imaginative policies for reversing the brain drain of highly educated and skilled people from this country to advanced countries and Saudi Arabia in search of better paid jobs. Although these workers see themselves as citizen of the world, these measures could include more deliberate discussions with the countries involved to take such migration of a determi-

nate and nationally regulated duration. Political stability and security, buoyance in our economy and employment opportunities are the greatest anti-date against brain drain in the final analysis.

EMPLOYERS AND LABOUR

The Dialogue observed that workers and employers should be seen as partners in progress - keeping faith with agreements and establishing mutual understanding on a wide variety of issues. Central organizations like the Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA) or the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) should not be seen as negotiating bodies but rather as consultants who are required to advise and help their members in maintaining good labour relations. It is sad to note that the state as an employer of labour does not use these organisations more seriously for enhancing good industrial relations. In most cases, these bodies are hardly consulted by government in taking critical issues that affect the economy and require real commitment to increased productivity on the part of management and labour.

With regard to individual trade unions, the Dialogue noted the importance of strengthening the culture of making the terms of agreement of any negotiation, once accepted by both parties, to be mutually binding. Equally, the State as an employer of labour itself should resist the temptation of proscribing trade unions. The unions on their part should work to strengthen the consultative status of their central organisation (the NLC). To this end, the Dialogue would recommend that industrial establishments should be allowed by the unions to pay their affiliation dues directly to the NLC.

STATE AND LABOUR

The discussion noted the need to distinguish between the role of the State as an employer and the State as a political sovereign entity. In the latter capacity, the position of the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) and the whole State apparatus of arbitration where negotiation has failed needs to be seen as institutionally neutral and autonomous. It is advisable to stem the present trend whereby the judiciary is increasingly being dragged unnecessarily into the settlement of intra-union disputes. Instead of unions rushing to the courts to settle every dispute, it is better for them to go to the Industrial Arbitration Panel. The NLC should increasingly play a prominent role in such conflict situation and assist the Ministry of Labour in seeing that the standards of industrial relations in the country are as good as the International Labour Organisation would have wanted it.

In fact, it was felt that the apparatus for effective labour utilisation and harmonious labour relations are already in existence in the country. Whether or not it is functioning efficiently is another consideration. The Dialogue felt that government has the responsibility to obey its own laws. Individuals who bend the rules because of vested interests should be checked if the interest of all are to be preserved.

There is need for the State to enhance the formal education of all workers in order to systematically eradicate illiteracy and improve their productive capacity. Already there is in existence a National Council for Management Development. A logical corollary is that there should be a National Council for Labour Education which is to be established for the workers. This should establish its own operational organ and training institutions which should be separate and distinct from the activities of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF). Such a body and its training institutions can then clearly represent Government's contribution to the efforts of the labour movement to establish Labour Colleges and engage in the development of workers' ability and consciousness of their role in the economic progress of the country.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND WORK ETHICS

The Dialogue recognised the existence of human and structural environment for the efficient and effective performance of labour. The human environment consists of the cultural and social background of the workers. This embraces the totality of the work and home situation within which workers have to operate. In this connection, the Dialogue considers that the nation has to give a more deliberate attention to the quality of family life and the type of socialization to national mores and to the dignity of labour that individuals get from their home background. There is need for research into the different systems of family socialization among different ethnic groups in the country. Such a study will improve our appreciation of how labour, from childhood, is given basic moral education and made to internalize the value system of the society. It would also assist the parents and the society at large to begin to take corrective measures to stress positive aspects of our culture esxpecially those which make for hardwork, honesty and integrity and are conducive to enhanced production.

The structural environment refers more to situation in the workplace. It relates to the network of relations within the workplace which ensures that work is effectively done at all times. In recent times, there is concern with the value of what is called "assertive training" to enhance the efficiency of this environment. This training is intra-organisational and seeks to create a situation whereby if the formal or official head or

leader of an operational unit is not around at any point in time, the network of relations is such that an informal leadership evolves automatically to ensure the smooth-running of the place and the achievement of the production target. The Dialogue recommends that this style of management-labour relation should be explored further in the country as a means of achieving higher production levels and placing industrial labour relations on a level more in keeping with the developmental aspirations of the country.

On a more mundane level, it was suggested that greater attention should be given to the safety and health conditions of work environment. The Inspectorate Division of the Ministry of Labour has the responsibility for ensuring this and needs to be more rigorous in its efforts. A publicity campaign should also be mounted to educate workers and the population at large about common industrial accidents and safety measures available just as is done with road safety. It was noted that the agency in the Ministry of Labour responsible for these functions has always been understaffed and needs to be greatly strengthened.

Apart from the home and the workplace, there is need to look at the general environment within which individuals have to work. The deforestation of most of the country, oil spillage in most riverine areas and the deposition of toxic wastes all over our urban centres deserve more serious attention by government than has been evident to date. Although the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing has responsibility for environmental protection, the nation is still to feel the impact of its activities in this regard except for the splendid work done to remove the toxic waste dumped in Koko by an Italian group. In addition, there is virtually no effective control of the importation of various chemicals and toxic substances into the country. In the case of fertilizers, application to soils in most cases is without any proper soil analysis to ascertain which chemical or fertilizers are suitable to designated areas. In fact, some micro-biologists have suggested that the present invasion of the nation's lagood systems by water hyacinths may be due to the seepage of elements from chemical fertilisers into these waters. Reference was also made to the international dumping of toxic materials in the Koko area which was only discovered through the vigilance of Nigerian students in Italy. Clearly, there is need for a more concerted national effort to enhance qualitatively the working environment of citizens whether in the rural or urban areas of the country.

With respect to work ethics it was stressed that the easy way in which some people made money has made most Nigerians lose their sense of purpose and direction. As a nation, we need to re- emphasise the virtue of hard work and of frugality in spending our returns from such exertion. Our leaders need to set the right example both in

their private and their official lives. For a country that seriously wants to develop, we must also look at our laws and our legal system to ensure they serve to promote these virtues. It is only recently that our Ministry of Justice has started to review our laws of economic sabotage. State tax authorities should be more vigilant in ensuring that those who flaunt their suddenly acquired wealth in the face of the public are at least made to pay due tax on it.

For the work ethics in Nigeria to change, there is need for the nation to be seen as striving to ensure that everyone is gainfully employed. There are still many avenues for gainful employment of labour which are unexplored in this country. For example, many people can be employed to plant trees to prevent desertification and prevent deforestation or to set up plantations. The Dialogue recommended that there should be a deliberate effort by government to encourage such tree planting activities. Apart from providing shades, such planted trees can serve to beautify our cities, to check wind erosion and to collect toxic gases from the atmosphere. The country can at least practicalize the campaign of ensuring that one tree is planted to replace every tree cut in the process of land clearing. Parks and gardens can also be established in most of our cities and appropriate policy packages can be put together to encourage a more sustainable programme of housing development in the country. All of this would help towards increasing employment opportunities in the country and facilitating the evolution of a more development-oriented work ethics.

At the work place, the method of selection of individuals for particular jobs should also be closely examined in terms of its effects on work ethics. Those who must supervise or monitor the performance of other workers must be people who could be respected in terms of their own competence. The issue of job serucity was also crucial to the observance of ethical standards. The Dialogue observed that people are not likely to give of their best or to be very honest if tomorrow or any day they can just hear their names on the radio that they have been retired or retrenched without any warning irrespective of the terms of employment.

For the work ethics in Nigeria to change we need to see that everybody is gainfully employed. There are still a lot of avenues for gainful employment of labour which are yet unexplored in this country, e.g. planting of trees to prevent desertification and prevent deforestation.

The Dialogue recommended that there should be a deliberate effort by government and some concerned citizens to encourage tree planting. Apart from shades, the trees serve as wind breakers and they help to collect toxic gases from the atmosphere. At least one tree must be planted in order to replace each tree cut in the process of

land clearing. Parks and gardens should be a cultivated. And there should be a housing policy so as to prevent overcrowding in houses and the appropriate laws must be fully implemented.

At the work place, the method of selection of individuals for particular jobs should be closely studied. It was felt that there is a need to also monitor the performance of the workers. It is also important that the job security should be ensured. The discussants felt that there is little point in working hard if by tomorrow or any day you can hear your name on the radio that you have been retired without any warning irrespective of the terms of employment.

In the society at large, the Dialogue advised that the law enforcement agency should take more seriously issues connected with the safety and sanctity of life in the country. The new development whereby assasins are sent to liquidate opponents, colleagues seen as competitors, or business associates is certainly not conducive to efficient work. Apart from the negative aspects of such social menace on children and the society at large, potential foreign investors would be frightened away and general economic development of the country will suffer.

WHAT IS LABOUR

Although an attempt was made at the beginning of the Dialogue to define labour as any human effort that improves, creates or adds value to other factors it was observed that the supply of labour is usually determined by the total population in a country, particularly those within the age group 15 to 64 years. These are the economically active people whether or not they are actually working. The 64 year limit is of special relevance to work in the modern sector of the economy since it is assumed that beyond a specified age the productivity of a worker diminishes and he needs to retire. However, for the self employed people especially in the so called informal sector of the economy work often continues until death or until the individual can no longer muster up enough energy to perform.

Notwithstanding these distinctions, the Dialogue noted that in any country, labour also embraces groups which are not usually given adequate consideration. Such groups include the handicapped, unpaid, unorganised, children, women, informal sector and the unemployed.

Handicapped people can make their own contribution to development if the society will accept them rather than pity them. The ILO convention recommended that

about 2% of employment in any country should be reserved for the handicapped. Although a party to the convention, Nigeria is still to give substance to this recommendation. A labour legislation to this effect needs to be enacted soon and various programmes developed to implement the provisions of such a legislation.

The Dialogue, of course, recognises that employing handicapped labour entails special investment both to make their work participation possible and to reduce their liability to accidents. Industries and employers of labour who take on such people could be allowed to deduct from their tax the cost of providing ramps instead of stairways for such people or of having special toilets and so on. In addition equipments for the disabled, such as wheel chair, braille typewriter, hearing aids, should be subsidised so that they will be available at affordable prices. It was noted that the Federal Ministry of Social Development gives annual subvention to voluntary organisations aiding the handicapped but the amount is hardly enough to meet their essential demands. There is need for a better articulated national programme for training the handicapped and seeing this not as a residual social service left in the hands of voluntary organisation. There is also need for harmonising such training and placing the responsibility under one Ministry either Social Development or Education instead of the present confusion whereby the schedule in the States is in one or the other Ministry.

In the computation of the gross national product of the nation, there is always some imputation for unpaid work. These include the work of wives and children on the farms and food processing which are caried on by women within the household. The labour of children helping their parents to sell various wares is also usually not paid too. This category of labour also includes all labour which is not paid for but which can be valued at market price; for instance when a manager enjoys gardening and spends his evenings improving the beauty and trimness of his garden or when individuals volunteer to perform certain services free for an organisation. This latter category of unpaid labour is vitally important for a nation's development. They do not need to be transformed into paid employment but society needs to encourage more and more such useful but not wage-oriented labour to enhance the quality of life of its members.

Non-organised labour refers to a category of labour who are mostly uneducated, unskilled or have no information about other people doing similar jobs or how they can ccome together in order to further their interests. Examples of such unorganized labour include illegal immigrants, popularly referred to as aliens, who cannot get into trade unions. In some cases these aliens are paid less than the going rate. There are also cases where trade union organisation is disallowed by law to certain group of workers. A notable exanple is the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). In

general, unionization is recognised as a means of minimising the wanton exploitation of labour in the process of development. For this reason, government should as much as possible encourage all categories of labour to organise itself to protect and further their interests as a group.

The employment of youths who are under the legal age of labour is regarded as child labour. These are usually children who are below 15 years of age. Traditionally, children have always helped their parents at work both in the home and on the farm. In modern times, however, schooling has reduced the scope of such child labour in many parts of the country. However, the reality of the present economic woes and the mass unemployment in the country had made it necessary for many more parents to fall back on utilising the labour of their children to make ends meet and ensure survival. In many cases, mothers put wares on the children's heads to sell after school hours. But unacceptable are cases of those who have to withdraw their children from school and send them out to sell various articles while their mates are in school. The harmful effect of this practice especially on the development and future career of these children cannot be under-estimated.

The Dialogue agrees that there is need to awaken the government to its commitment to the people's welfare. There is need to enforce existing legislation against child labour or street trading by children but this can be successful only to the extent that abject poverty is reduced in the society.

With respect to women, the Dialogue noted that the usual practice now is to encourage working women, especially those in the formal sector to participate actively in trade unions. The United Nations has given advice as to the involvement of women activities in trade unions. For the past 30 years women have been very active in Nigerian trade unions and there is no longer any need for special pleadings on their behalf on this score. However, it was observed that in many enterprises women are still subjected to one form of discrimination or the other. In the present situation of mass unemployment, employers prefer to employ men rather than women on the excuse that men are the breadwinner whereas the number of households headed by women has been increasing in the society in recent times. Even when employed, a woman may have to work much harder than her male counterpart before she gets promoted. In some cases, women face health hazards at work, e.g. varicose veins among nurses and teachers who have to stand for long at work, inhalation of chemicals which could cause miscarriages, irregular menstrual cycle among air hostesses, and other discomforts. In addition, the Nigerian tax laws impose a heavier burden on women than men workers because child relief is usually not given to the women. For the self employed, women have problems in getting access to capital and credit.

If development in Nigeria must be further enchanced, it is essential that any traditional or cultural practice that inhibits the full participation of women in the labour force must be checked. Examples of such practices include the early age of marriage of between 9 and 15 years for girls in some parts of the country. Up to the mid-1960s this practice was common in Igbo land. It is still the case in the northern parts of the country. The health danger of such early marriages are many and it is important for government to embark on a more vigorous programme of training and educating such teenagers and enact legislations to make it a crime to withdraw them from schools for the purpose of giving them out in marriage.

The Dialogue further noted that many more Nigerians both males and females, are employed in what is now popularly referred to as the "informal sector." The ILO definition says any enterprise that employs less than ten people belongs to this sector. Those enterprises besides tend to have low level of capital investment and are usually not registered as businesses. They are engaged in such activities as cottage industrial production, mechanical repairs, food processing and so on. Some of these enterprises have been most ingenious in their production. There are, for example, the well-known implements fabricators in Aba and the motor spare parts makers in Nnewi. Currently, the Institute of Productivity Development and PRODA in Enugu are helping the enterprises in achieving greater improvement in the quality of their products and in the maintenance of their equipment. There is need for government to set up a special Enterprises Promotion Board to assist these small-scale establishments. It is also important for government to take an interest in the work environment and labour relations in these enterprises and to protect their intellectual and industrial property so as to restrain the extreme forms of exploitation that have been noted among them in other parts of the world.

Finally, there is now an increasing number of school leavers and graduates who are unemployed and must be provided with jobs. In addition, a large number of people are getting retrenched or retired from their work prematurely because of the need to structurally adjust the economy. Even where people are employed, underutilisation of capacity is also giving rise to the phenomenon of under-employment.

Avenues for job creation for the unemployed have to be sought out and actively developed. These could be in such projects as improving the curves and gradientsof our railway lines and dualling the lines, engaging in public housing schemes, planting of trees, expanding agriculture or in social work like handling disabled people and the aged. Such projects usually stimulate the growth of numerous informal sector activities which, in turn, create a lot of jobs for the unemployed.

Government can also plan to put a large number of unemployed to work on uncompleted and abandoned projects and can also use them for general environmental improvement. This latter, by indicating a new national consciousness in matters of the environment, can attract funds from abroad especially from Japan and the Nordic countries, which are very concerned with the growing threat to the balance of the global ecosystem arising from serious degradation and pollution of the environment.

LABOUR AND POLITICS

The Nigerian Labour Movement has always been interested in the politics of the country from colonial times. Up to national independence, its protests and strikes were always part of the national agitation for self-rule. However, with independence, labour leaders were forced by the politicians into a secondary role. It did not matter whether the regime was a military or civilian, in most cases labour came to be seen more as adversary than as partners in the programme of national development.

The present move by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) to form a Nigerian Labour Party is an attempt by organised labour to actively participate in politics instead of being used as pawns in the power game. There was a lot of argument in the Dialogue for and against this development. Those who were against felt that the move could divide organised labour especially on ideological lines. Although there was need for Nigerian labour to be politically active and to ensure that its members perform their civic responsibilities, the idea of forcing them all into one party may be counterproductive and disruptive of labour unity and effectiveness. On the other hand, it was argued that a labour party could help actualise the political ambition of Nigerian labour. Citing the example of the Labour Party in Britain which was distinct from the Trade Union Congress, it was indicated that this was the model the NLC would want to establish in Nigeria. Since 1979, the NLC had engaged in the political education of its members who were now tired of being used by professional politicians. This was the background to the decision to broaden the activcities of the Congress beyond the workplace right into the arena of politics.

The Dialogue could reach no agreement on the wisdom of this move and it was felt that only time can tell.

NIGERIAN CULTURE, LABOUR RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Following on the position held in the Second Farm House Dialogue, it was agreed that there is not one culture that is distinctly Nigerian but there are traits and usages that are common to most Nigerian ethnic groups. The warmth of people in greetings, the rhythm of their music, their pattern of dancing and the care and concern for one's relations - all these and others are commonly found throughout the country. Such common cultural elements can therefore be used to establish positive attitude to work and labour in the nation. The use of music to stimulate concentration and concerted effort at work can be introduced into factory production. Increased social contracts between workers and management can serve to ease industrial stresses and tension. Our traditional society has always recognised and rewarded honesty, hardwork, integrity and dedication, whilst not only being critical of but outright condemn indiscipline, theft, corruption and dishonesty. The kinship system represented the traditional social insurance scheme whilst constant consultation among age groups, residents of quarters or ward or even the whole city were regarded as basic element of social and political life. Those who were inventive or innovative were also rewarded traditionally. Even when such people are young, they were given positions of honour and respect. All of these values of traditional Nigerian societies need to be recaptured and used positively to enhance labour's contribution to the development process.

The search for knowledge remains a key to our culture. Men of knowledge and wisdom were always acknowledged and honoured. In the modern context, the Dialogue emphasised the importance of making continuous self-improvement an essential part of work culture in Nigeria. Part-time studies of various types should be facilitated through provisions of appropriate institutions. In the Army, for instance, there are several regular training courses which an individual attends to be able to pass from one stage to another before promotion. During the Obasanjo regime, the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and the Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPS) were established to ensure constant upgrading of the competence of public servants, both civilian and military. Yet the Dialogue observed that there is a growing anti-intellectualism in the public service such that teachers are today being penalised for undertaking Masters degree programmes and extra qualifications acquired by civil servants are not brought into consideration for their promotion if other merits are equal. There is also the tendency to brand out-spoken intellectuals as radicals and to proceed to mete out various punitive measures against them.

There are, however, some aspects of our culture that are negative and must be eschewed. The practice of not keeping to time for appointments or for work is incompatible with modern life where increasingly time means money. The tendency to fritter away time during working hours either writing letters or gossiping is not conducive to increasing productivity. Physical fighting or assault or a propensity to shouting and to be abusive is ill mannered, uncivilised and not in line with modern working practice. One multinational company for instance, has a rule whereby individuals caught fighting within company premnises are dismissed.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this Dialogue on labour and development, there was general agreement as to the primacy of culture in determining how people behave and react to work. As such, the Dialogue reiterates the importance of the Nigerian national paying close attention to the socialization process whereby children are taught the norms and values of the society and made to imbibe the work ethics as well as to the educational system which equips them with the skills and competence to work more productively. Furthermore, the Dialogue stresses that in order to increase the productivity of labour, the actual living conditions of the worker encompassing his housing, its surroundings as well as the social environment must be made conducive to good health and satisfying existence. In line with this, the Dialogue believe that it is imperative that the most unskilled worker must be able to earn a "living wage" that is enough to meet the expenses of the barest existence.

In the society at large the Dialogue recognised that social problems, political instability, insecurity of person and property and constant state intervention militate against the efficiency of labour. It therefore recommends that there should be policies on population, employment, housing, and social justice so as to ensure the safety of life and reassure the people that their efforts at development will be appropriately recognised and rewarded. It was noted, however, that having policies on critical aspects of national life is one thing; properly implementing the policies is another. It was agreed that effective policy implementation has become a serious problem for Nigerian development and demands that a future session of the Farm House Dialogue be devoted to it.

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OPENING ADDRESS BY ALF CHAIRMAN:

General Olusegun Obasanjo

I welcome you all to the Farm House Dialogue, the fifth in our development series. The focus of our dialogue this weekend is indeed a vital and crucial factor in the development process.

Land, Labour and Capital have over the years been regarded as the three essential ingredients of economic growth and development. But then from a generation of experience, entrepreneurship, management and technology have come to be seen as equally important, and could make of mar a nation's march of progress.

To my mind, labour is not so much the brawn, but the skill that goes with it. That is the skills imparted on the natural and material resources available within the country to achieve an increasing socialization of nature for the joint benefit of all. This structures and instructs the output of labour and the developmental capacity of the country, it is therefore acceptable to denote the Gross National Product (GNP) of a country as the crystallization of the country's labour and the physical expression of the quantity and quality of the country's labour.

In essence, it is not labour per-se that is important, it is the productivity of labour that is and should remain as vital. Where labour has low productivity, or a productivity that is lower than its cost, it is hardly of any conceivable advantage or benefit to anyone. In a case where the cost of labour outstrips its productivity, it becomes an attenuating rather than an enhancing factor in the development process. Labour must aspire and inspire itself to productivity and creation of surplus.

Development as an end goal requires and demand that labour be a catalyst in the development process. To perform its expected role efficiently, the productivity of labour must be at either optimum level or near optimum level. It is within such a context that the rewards of labour would be expressed in the collective or social wealth of the nation. The most essential form of increasing and improving the quality and performance of labour is through in-house and on-the-job training for there may be no substitute. All labour to be efficient and effective must have certain amount of skill. It is in the presence of the skill and the responsible utilisation of it, that the term 'dignity of

labour' is meaningful. Labour is positive and constructive action that motivates, builds and achieves. Labour constructs.

Over the years, it has often been erroneously conceived that labour is synonymous with manual labourers and lower levels of workers in a country. However, this is not so, because the entrepreneur, the management cadre and the working population form the totality of a country's labour force. Of course they operate at different level of labour force. Labour taken in its total circumspection include management and the entrepreneur and such a total package in the operational definition of labour, enables one to take a broader conception of the role of labour in any country. It is on this basis that the rigidity with which the line of demarcation between labour and management is drawn must be re-examined if we are to explore the common grounds and the various points for the pursuance of the goal of development. The rigidity is informed by master-servant relationship of the period of slave trade and slavery. We must move away from that arcnaic concept. Entrepreneurs, management and labour are on the same side of the coin. Entrepreneurship as an essential component of labour must be established, encouraged and sustained through aspiration and inspiration from within the totality of the labour force. Entrepreneurs must not act or be seen as obscene consumers of what is perceived as the products of the work of the toilers. They are motivators, mobilisers and risk takers in the development process but only as part of the labour team from which they must not isolate or detach themselves.

If development is all about releasing the creative energies of the people, then releasing the total energy within the country, will involve releasing the energy politically, socially and economically. The sharp edges of the stratification drawn between labour and management must be blurred. Management has become professional. It must be perceived and be treated as such. Thrusting people in top management position for whatever reason without adequate preparation, experience and exposure may spell disaster on the organisation to the detriment of all concerned - entrepreneur, management and staff. My conviction is that having management ranging on one side and labour on the other side downplays the necessary harmony and common interests, while exacerbating and aggravating the differences. It robs corporate bodies of a concerted and collective movements in crucial moments, and enthrones suspicions and mutual distrust while diverting attention away from more serious issues of achieving corporate goals. Social stratification is unfortunately an inescapable reality we can not deny and a harmonious society must provide opportunities for social mobility. Permit me to quote from the biography of Abraham Lincoln, who observed that "...You can not bring prosperity by discouraging thrift, you can not strengthen the weak by weakening the strong; you can not help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer; you can not further the brotherhood of man by class hatred; you can not build character and

courage by taking away man's initiative and independence, you can not help men permanently by doing for them what they could or should do for themselves."

My addition to this is that we need to accept that several segments of society must have common interest in development, growth and equity. It would be wrong for us to continue to accept that interests between labour and management must remain diametrically opposed. To me, I see their interests, duties and responsibilities as complementary. The Japanese have shown the world that a lot of grounds for harmony and accord exists between labour and management without resorting to strikes, trade disputes and confrontational measures. This is rooted in their culture of work and working place as a life-long relationship with shared interest, progress and adversity. Industrial conflicts have thus become effectively routinised in Japan mainly because of the effective usage of consultations and the consolidation of gains made on such consultations. The implication of this lies in the avoidance of loss in which results from a paralysis of production process, the wastage in terms of man hours lost and the overall loss in output. Is there anything in our culture that can be adopted and adapted in modern day business organisation and labour practice. Have we got any lesson to learn from our past communal responsibility and community duties, consultation and mediation which managed conflicts and disputes? Must not our national character and value include right attitude to work and labour, management and entrepreneurial relationship? Can we move up in the ladder of development without adequate work ethics and work culture? Let us deliberate on these issues. I wish you fruitful discussion.

BACKGROUND NOTE ON THE AFRICA LEADERSHIP FORUM

Despite over a quarter of a century of political independence, Africa's aspirations and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled. This has not been, however, a period of unmitigated failure in the history of the continent; there have been successes in education, public health, import substitution industries, and in the continuing process of decolonization. The problems of development, peace and security, the health of the world economy, and improving the environment are interrelated global issues; they do not admit of piecemeal solutions.

And yet all countries find that in the absence of true global cooperation, they have to tackle particular aspects of them. At the national level in Africa, the inadequacy of information, data, and resources render the problems daunting. Regionally they are overwhelming.

African leaders have frequently come to their positions with limited experience. Though most of them have battled on, confronting their awesome problems of development and nation-building essentially not only unprepared but unaided, their efforts have been at best only a qualified success.

Africa cannot afford to continue with ill-prepared and unassisted leaders. Those on whom the burden of leadership will fall in future must fully comprehend their responsibilities, duties, and obligations. They must, that is, have exposure and carefully planned preparation if they are to meet the challenges that will face them.

The leaders of tomorrow, however, today have to be pursuing their professional careers. They have little time to devote to gaining a comprehensive knowledge of their own countries and their region, nor of the cultures of their diverse peoples. Nor even to learning about and understanding the actions taken by their present leaders where they do not impinge on their own areas of expertise.

Most young potential leaders have focused primarily on single issues,lacking time to look at wider, critical regional and world challenges. Time for comprehensive study and reflection, for sharing experiences with persons inside, let alone outside, their countries, region, and field of concentration is very limited. Opportunities for such detached discussion and contemplation are even rarer.

There are no private institutions in AFrica devoted to preparing potential leaders with a global outlook, leaders who will be able to cooperate within and across national,

regional, and institutional boundaries. Further, it is difficult, if not impossible, in many African countries to gain access to relevant and timely information on most national, regional, and global issues.

Experience in and out of Government and in international fora bears out this situation, one which poses a challenge to address and remedy. One solution is to hold periodically the "Africa Leadership Forum" - a series which may be national, subregional, regional and international in dimension and may vary in duration. Their purpose will be to enhance the knowledge and awareness of young, potential African leaders, placing special emphasis on diagnosing apparent failures of the past; on understanding multiple dimensions and complex interrelations of local, national, regional, and global problems; and on seeking possible approaches to solutions.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Forum is to encourage diagnosis, understanding, and an informed search for solutions to local, regional and global problems, taking full account of their interrelationships and mutual consequences.

To that end, the Forum will develop, organize and support programmes for the training of young and promising Africans with leadership potential so as to expose them to the demands, duties and obligations of leadership positions and to prepare them systematically for assuming higher responsibilities and meeting the challenges of an interdependent world.

The Forum will also endeavour to generate greater understanding and enhance the knowledge and awareness of development and social problems within a global context among young, potential leaders from all sectors of society, cutting across national, regional, continental, professional and institutional borders. This may foster close and enduring relationships among participants, relationships promoting life-long association and cooperation;

Further, the Forum will support and encourage the diagnosis and informed search for appropriate and effective solutions to local and regional Africal problems and to global problems from an African perspective - within the framework of global interdependence -, including conideration of phased action programmes that can be initiated by various countries, sub-regions and institutions.

In addition, there will be specific weekend seminars organized as Farm House Dialogues to be held quarterly. The first of the Dialogues entitled "Leadership for Development" was held on 13 14 May 1988.